

# ADRIENNE SOLSER, QUEEN OF FARCES<sup>1</sup>

*Bet, de koningin van de jorjaan* was Adriënné Solder's first film for her own production company, the Hollando-Belgica Film Company 'Eureka'. This was her fortieth anniversary as an actress; until 1921 she had worked in variety and revue, and then also in silent cinema, in which she had until then played two leading roles and two supporting roles.<sup>2</sup> That was in 1924 and she was 51 years old. Simultaneously with this jubilee she announced her farewell, which she did not keep. There were three more *bet*-films, all following the same pattern: jolly *Jorjaan* comedies with Solder in the leading role on the screen and in the flesh on the stage to speak the dialogues and sing the songs. This gave rise to a series of extremely Dutch and extremely comic film productions which continued to be popular with the public until the 1930s.

In fact, they still do that today. The Netherlands Film Museum, where two of the *beta*-tion films have been preserved, also had the accompaniment of Solder reconstructed by the vocalist Jet Pit and the pianist Stefan Ram. I was able to attend a few of these screenings, and the audience was totally into it every time.

This was also the conclusion of Peter Delpéut, who as deputy director of the Dutch Film Museum also commissioned the reconstruction. Because of Solder's performances at the screenings, Delpéut, in his introduction to Geoffrey Donaldson's filmography of the Dutch silent fiction film, rightly made a link with all sorts of forms of musical and verbal accompaniment which were common in the ~~st~~cinema.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this did not lead to a revised vision of Solder's work. Delpéut contrasted the *beta*-tional films sharply with the rest of the film production at that time and qualified them as amateurish, because they did not correspond to the artistic standards of camerawork, directing and acting that were being pursued in the film industry at that time. In terms of genre and theme, they also contrasted sharply with the majority of Dutch silent fiction films, which consisted of melancholy dramas full of fatal twists and ~~un~~happy loves. According to Delpéut, even the comedies of the time were harsh and merciless.

Indeed, Solder's farces are of an entirely different order, but that can also be formulated in a less marginalizing way. They are entertaining and

good-natured persiflages on popular types, on male-female relationships and on genres of theatre and film that were popular at the time. They usually contain a socially relevant scene or storyline in which the main character, Bet, stands up for the weaker members of society. There are no fatal twists or love stories, the protagonists are always childless couples who know each other inside out and who end up in a series of ridiculous situations together. Moreover, the main female character, Bet, is full of self-mockery, a disarming quality which is not often seen in silent films in the Netherlands.

In essence Delpeut's findings reflect the dilemma with which the historiography of film in relation to Adrienne Solser has always struggled, namely that her work is difficult to place in a historical context which places film as film centrally and consequently looks above all at cinematographic qualities and innovation, and at the showing of film as an independent form of art or entertainment. Indeed, the form of Solser's films and those of her performances diverged considerably from the norms which lie at the basis of such a vision, and from such a perspective they ~~cannot~~ be seen as amateurish and anachronistic. This dilemma was also broached once before by Ruud Bishoff when he wrote: "Tastes differ and tastes change, but that doesn't mean that someone with such an oeuvre can't be seen as a blot on film history."<sup>4</sup> At a time when Solser's work was still thought to be lost and no reconstruction of her accompaniment was yet available, Bishoff put that accompaniment in a context of experiments with sound, but as we can now see, that doesn't really square with her practice of speaking dialogues and performing sing-alongs. Bishoff did point to the size and success of Solser's oeuvre, and also to the fact that she was one of the few women who had managed to hold her own in the male-dominated world of Dutch film for decades. Indeed, Solser was the only film-maker in the Netherlands between Caroline van Dommelen in the early 1910s and Nouchka van Brakel since the late 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

Yet even this observation does not solve the dilemma mentioned above, as a category of gender exception, like deviation from the norm, offers no insight into the cultural environment in which Adrienne Solser's work caught on and thrived. That environment was not at all concerned with the specificity of gender, and even less with the problems of the Dutch film industry. Nevertheless, as a film actress and filmmaker, Adrienne Solser was responsible for a whole series of typically Dutch farces that remained popular with the public for a long time. It is precisely these aspects that deserve the attention of film history and should be understood from there. What my research shows is that this requires a broadening of the perspective to include types of entertainment and contexts of screening and reception that go beyond film and film narration as such. Contemporary film historiography recognizes the importance of the

It is true that this applies to film before the First World War, but it still often narrows our vision when we study the fifteen years of silent cinema which followed. The film historical dilemma concerning Adrienne Solser and her work bears witness to this.

The question of the contexts of screening and reception arose as a result of a great many enthusiastic reactions to Solder's work in the national press, examples of which I will give later. The enthusiasm invariably concerned the comic content both of the films themselves and of the performances accompanying them. This meant that there were genres and traditions in the silent film culture to which Solder's work did correspond and which the public at the time valued. This realization required research into connections between her theatre and film oeuvre, not only in terms of acting, but especially with regard to the genres, characters and forms of film representation with which Solder's work could be related. The so-called *Jordaan* genre proved crucial in this respect; it was a type of comic theatre that had many more variants than just the plays by Herman Boubert, which are known in film history for their repeated filming. In addition, the tradition of mixed programming of film screening and live performances was at least as important, and not only did it exist on a large scale, but it also continued long after the cinema had proved itself as an independent form of entertainment on the eve of the war. The second part of this article deals with these perspectives and their significance for Solder's oeuvre.

To show why these perspectives are necessary, however, we must first discuss Solser's career and oeuvre in more detail. The guiding principle here is the question of what ambitions Adrienne Solser herself had, what professional options her professional field and cultural environment offered her, and what choices she made. After all, she was not only a film actress and filmmaker in the 1920s, but in the preceding three decades also acted as a comedian in variety shows, revues, and cinemas. This was partly made possible by historical shifts in the world of entertainment, as a result of which the various types of ~~entertainment~~ came to stand in different relationships to one another. Not only did these shifts make Solder's choices possible, but the changes were also shaped by her choices (and those of her colleagues). This is the first part of this argument.

### Three-dimensional approach

The way out of this dilemma is, in my opinion, the three-dimensional approach. The starting point is the ambitions and choices that make up an individual's career. These are historicized by relating them to the shifts within the professional and interdisciplinary field of the entertainment industry of the time, in which that career and the accompanying

oeuvre. In order to establish how the oeuvre was seen and experienced, it is also examined inter- temptingly for the genres and traditions with which it is related. I have called this ~~kind~~ interdisciplinary and intertextual approach "careerography". I gave it a name because, as I showed in my dissertation, this approach also works for other actresses/filmmakers in the ~~st~~ cinema whose careers and oeuvres are difficult to place using the available film historical categories. In this article, however, I will concentrate on Adriënne Solser, whom I hope to give the place in Dutch film history that she deserves.

## Career and work

### Before 1900: the Solser family

Adriënne Solser (1873-1943) came from a family of 'artists', as actors were called in those days. Her father, Johannes Solser (called Van der Vank)<sup>6</sup> was the director of a travelling theatre company, to which her mother, Engelina Hartlooper, also belonged and in which four of the five children learned the trade. The Van der Vank company gave performances at fairs, annual events and local festivities in South Holland in the second half of the nineteenth century. Adriënne Solser's younger brother was Lion Solser, who became especially famous as a member of the Ensemble Solser en Hesse, which further consisted of Piet Hesse and the two wives of the duo, Adriënne Solser-Willemsens and Anna Hesse-Slauderof. With this ensemble, Lion Solser celebrated 'triumphs' in the 1910s in so-called *fairground plays*, a kermisch theatre genre which will be discussed at length later on. Their elder brother was the legendary comedian Michel Solser, who at the end of the 1880s caused a furore in Café-Concert Victoria (known as "The Vic") in the Nes in Amsterdam, with a *sketch* called "The Artists' Revue". Their eldest sister Josephine also performed in this *sketch*, and Adriënne Solser herself made her Amsterdam debut in 1889. Michel Solser died of tuberculosis in 1893, after which each of the brothers and sisters went his or her own way in the world of entertainment. As for Adriënne Solser, she played roles in operettas in the Frascati Theatre in Amsterdam in 1895 and 1900. In the four intervening years she married twice, gave birth to three children, and spent a year in South Africa with her second husband Louis Boesnach. It is said that she also performed for some time in Belgium, but in 1900 she was back in the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>

**1902-1913: Adriënnë Solser 'soubrette'.**

From 1902 onwards, Adriënnë Solser presented solo performances in the variety show, a form of entertainment that was at the height of its popularity at the turn of the century. Variety programmes consisted of a varied series of 'specialties' (skill acts) performed by jugglers, illusionists, clowns, dancers, and animal trainers, which were alternated with 'numbers' (solo or duo performances) by singers and comedians. After the introduction of film in 1895, the programme usually included a 'film number' as well, which in turn consisted of an alternating series of short films, including current affairs, travelogues and comedies. Around the turn of the century, new forms of popular theatre, especially cabaret and revue, would also be included in variety programmes.

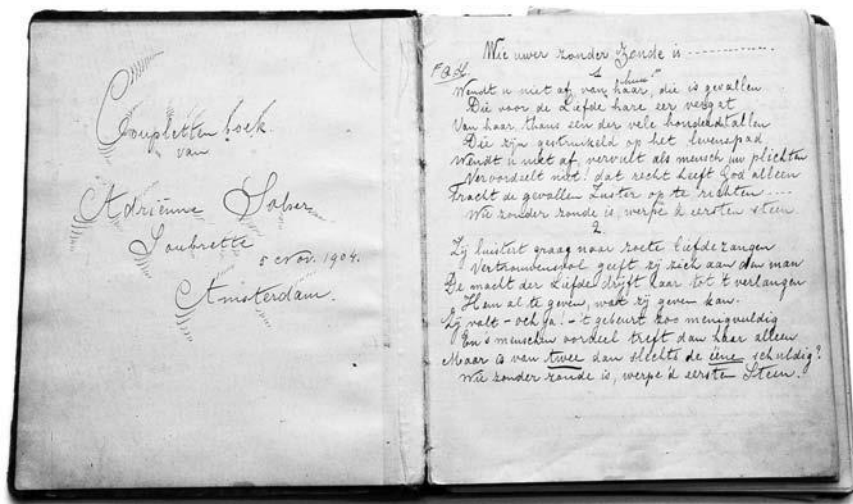
Until 1913 Adriënnë Solser appeared almost continuously on the posters of the leading variety theatres in the Netherlands, including Casino Soesman and Circus Pfläging in Rotterdam, the Scala in The Hague, the Grand Théâtre and the Panopticum in Amsterdam. Those were huge halls, something like the Theater Carré in Amsterdam. Only in those days, the audience did not sit and watch the performance, but could walk in and out, talk to each other and enjoy refreshments. It was also extremely mixed: rich and poor, young and old, men and women all attended the variety shows in large numbers. The performances therefore had to meet much higher standards than the flat carnival entertainment and the piquant tingling which it originated from: the variety show had to be tasteful and witty, a feast for the eyes and the ears, and suitable for all ages. At least as many women as men performed, and both sexes contributed to the respectability of what was on offer.

Solser's profession was that of 'elocutionist' or 'soubrette'. This meant that she performed 'couplets' (verses) and comic monologues, sang songs and told jokes. A 'number' in a variety show usually lasted half an hour, during which time, as Michel Solser said in an interview, 'one has to fill the whole stage on one's own and keep the audience in the desired mood'.<sup>8</sup> In a portrait of Adriënnë Solser's colleague Louisette, the requirements were described in more detail:

The cabaret and variety artist is (...) on her own and her first demand is: to make contact, to become the centre of attention, to drag us into the atmosphere of lively jokes and jokes, which is her only "goal". She must be a "gangster" in her own right, whose manner of acting is immediately decisive.<sup>9</sup>

That Adriënnë Solser was also such a gangster is evident from the reviews, and her comedic talent was praised even among colleagues:

The oldest dated notebook in which Solser recorded her repertoire. Source: Nederlands Filmmuseum, Adriënne Solser and Lien d'Oliveyra Archive



When I mention only the ladies (...) Heintje Davids and Adriënne Solser (...) of those who collaborate in the comic part, everyone will be convinced that a quantum lechery success will be delivered, sufficient to shake hundreds of sick livers to health'.<sup>10</sup>

One reviewer complimented her on these words:

Her creations are natural, without theatricality, and, wherever she may appear in the world, one understands her sweet full smile, her chaste burly action and diction.<sup>11</sup>

Solser did indeed perform in our neighbouring countries, besides Belgium also in Germany. According to the contemporary press, in the mid-teens she belonged to the top four female variety artists in the Netherlands, together with Louise Fleuron, Louisette, and Heintje Davids.

Adriënne Solser's pre-war performances were usually announced in advertisements with the phrase 'beautiful new repertoire', or 'in her latest creations'. How diverse these "creations" were can be deduced from the "verse books" that are kept in the Netherlands Film Museum. These are the notebooks in which Solser wrote down her repertoire for her own use. The oldest dates from 1904 (see illustration above), the most recent from 1935.<sup>12</sup>

The verses offer a gallery of female characters, who have in common that they are smart enough not to be fooled by men, by social hypocrisy, or by pomposity. Often they stand up for women and men at the bottom of society at the time, as in the above depicted 'Who is without sin...' for what was then called 'a

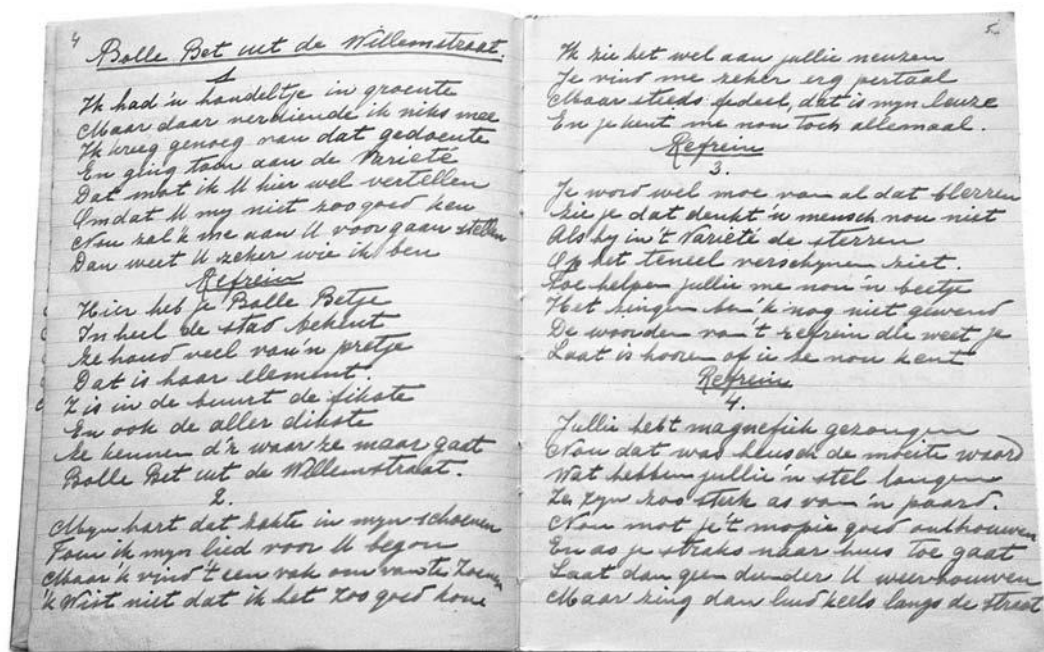
fallen woman. The verse asks the audience not to condemn this woman, because she is someone who chooses love, instead of marriage. Another verse is about a man who goes out stealing because otherwise he cannot give his daughter a Saint Nicholas present, and there are many other examples. The verses in which the women characters make fun of themselves are also interesting, because they are contradictory in their opinions or behaviour, for example, or because they have to manage in what were then new women's professions such as policewoman or jobseeker. I found the most surprising ones to be those in which their outward (un)attractiveness was parodied, especially if you consider that Solser himself was far from being unattractive, but had a sturdy posture. Unlike in my dissertation, I cannot do justice to the details and linguistic jokes contained in the verses in this brief overview. Nevertheless, I mention these specific elements from Solser's pre-war repertoire because they reappear in the type of song that she will increasingly focus on: that of the Rotterdam or Amsterdam working-class woman.

### 1914-1920: Adriënné Solser 'character humorist'

The type of the Amsterdam or Rotterdam working-class woman appears in Solser's repertoire from 1914 onwards. In January of that year she appeared in the Rose theater in Amsterdam with her "creation Ka as suffragette" and in February in the Metropole cabaret in Rotterdam with "her new character sketch De Suffragette uit de Jor- daan".<sup>13</sup> In April 1915 the name Bet appeared for the first time in the number 'Bolle Bet van de Groentemarkt' which Solser performed with great success in the Scala in The Hague. Whether she called the type Ka, Kee, or Bet since then, and referred to her as 'Bolle', 'Auntie' or 'Queen of the Jordaan', the down-to-earth, plain-spoken woman from the people who didn't mince words would increasingly dominate Solser's career. On her 30th anniversary as a theatre actress in 1919, the authoritative theatre and film critic Nathan Heyman Wolf described her as "a real popular artist, but of the purest race".<sup>14</sup> and he praised her as "the popular character humorist, known for her amusing portrayals of Amsterdam and Rotterdam folk types".<sup>15</sup> Since then the designation for her profession has been "character humorist", where "humorist" is a somewhat fancier word for soubrette, but the addition of "character" indicated that she made her jokes from the point of view of a fixed character: the Kee- or Bet-figure.

The verse books include a 'Bolle Bet from the Willemstraat'. Unfortunately, this scripture is undated, but in view of the other repertoire, it must be from the mid-teens. The plot of the verse relates that Bet used to be a greengrocer, but is now trying her luck in the variety show. Because she is still new to the profession, she asks the audience to help her and to sing along with the chorus. The refrain goes like this:





The text of 'Bolle Bet uit de Willemsstraat' with the refrain 'Hier heb je Bolle Betje' as written down by Adriënné Solser in an undated repertoire book. Source: Nederlands Filmmuseum, Adriënné Solser and Lien d'Oliveyra archives

"Here's Bolle Betje  
 known all over town  
 She loves a good time  
 That's her element  
 She's the fittest in the  
 neighbourhood And the  
 fattest too  
 They know her wherever she  
 goes, Bolle Bet from  
 Willemsstraat'.<sup>16</sup>

The spellings 'bekent' and 'haud' can be seen as mistakes, but also as a phonetic representation of the Jordanian accent. The same notebook also contains a prose text entitled 'Bolle Bet gaat aan 't tooneel' [Bolle Bet goes to the stage], in which it is stated that Bet would rather have joined the comedy, which like the operetta was held in higher esteem than the variety show, but that they did not want her there. What followed was a farcical summary of Bet's talents: she 'really' felt what she was playing and also let others feel it - hadn't she put one of her fellow actors in hospital? For Bet's confrontations with the various forms of theatre, Solser used data that she derived from her own career: for comedy she lacked training (read: she took 'making people feel' too literally),



For the operetta she had too big a mouth (read: no singing voice), and for the revue her legs were too fat (even then she was obviously the voluptuous appearance we know from her bet-films, and she was fatter than the norm at a time when chubbiness was fashionable in women). Because no one wants Bet, so the story goes, she will found her own company: "What I show is no calf parade, no asem in exile, but real true folk pieces which send shivers down your spine".<sup>17</sup> A striking detail is of course that a few years later she does indeed do this, by founding her own film production company. But what concerns me here is that Solser also used the Bet figure to make fun of her own profession and career, and her large body size.<sup>18</sup> Because this motif also recurs in Solser's films, self-mockery can be considered to be a fixed element of her type of theatre and film.

As a 'character humourist', Solser no longer performed in the variety shows between 1914 and 1920, but mainly in revues, cabarets and cinemas. At the turn of the century, these three forms of entertainment were part of the variety show. But they detached themselves from it and then largely absorbed it during the war.<sup>19</sup> What was left of the variety show then became part of revues and of cinema programmes. As will become clear in the second part of this article, Solser's performances were prototypical of this shift. In 1917, for instance, she performed in the Nieuw Olympia Theater in Rotterdam with a live act between the films, and in 1918 she appeared in the Christmas program of the Astoria-Theater in Rotterdam: 'Duo Solser De Wilde. Half an hour of uncontrollable laughter'.<sup>20</sup> From the verse books it is clear that with this Rinus de Wilde introduced the Bet-and-Hen combination in her repertoire.

In relation to the variety show, cabaret made sophisticated demands on the language and the presentation, while revues differed from both in that the individual 'numbers' were linked by a thematic line. Such a theme could be derived from current events, such as the fight for women's right to vote, or from a socio-cultural fact, such as the Amsterdam neighbourhood of the Jordaan. At the time, the Jordaan was a poor working class district, where most people earned a living as an itinerant trader or as a market vendor. Nevertheless, with its characteristic types and its own humor and idiom, the Jordaan appealed strongly to the imagination and the residents of the neighbourhood became a grateful subject for ridicule and satire in the comic theatre, including the revue. In the second half of the 1910s, the Jordaan revues were rife, most of them written by authors specialised in the genre, including Rido (the pseudonym of Philip Pinkhof, a journalist for *De Telegraaf* and husband of Heintje Davids) and Tony Schmitz. The most important requirement was that the texts should faithfully reflect the humor and the language of the Jordaanians and that the characters should also be true to life. This was also expected of an actress like Adriënné Solser, who, just like the majority of her colleagues who played the Jordaan characters, did not come from the neighbourhood herself.

Moreover, the audience was spoiled for choice, for as I shall explain later, the Jordaan genre had many variants besides the revue, notably *sketches*, *operettas*, *dramas* and *farces*.

In September 1915 Solser played her role in the Jordaan revue 'Does your mother already know?' of Rido in the Rozen-theater, 'in punctual Jordaansch dialect'.<sup>21</sup> In May 1916 she was part of the revue 'Kom j'eens kijken, zàg?' in the Bouwmeester Theatre in The Hague and one could read in the newspaper that she 'loved to keep the audience "pleasantly busy"'.<sup>22</sup> In 1918, even the former Casino Soesman variety theatre performed mainly operettas and revues, with in the Ter Hall revue, among others, Solser as 'De Rotterdamsche Vischvrouw'. In 1919, at the end of this selection, she celebrated her thirty-year stage anniversary in the Eden concert hall in Amsterdam and in the Karseboom Cabaret in The Hague "in her Jordaan presentations".<sup>23</sup>

The success of the Jordaan revues was so great that the press could scold them:

"The future of literary and theatrical directors lies in the Jordan, I tell you.  
Adam in Exile? Midsummer Night's Dream?  
Dismissed. A period that is behind us.  
"Blomkool-Hein" and "Shrimp-Bet".  
That is the future!  
Up the Jordan! "To the river Jordan!"<sup>24</sup>

The revue was performed in the Rozen Theater on Rozengracht in the middle of the Jordaan, which from 1915 onwards emerged as one of the centres for the genre.<sup>25</sup> The reason for the sneer was the fact that the performances - in a theatre with thousands of seats! - The reason for his sneer was the fact that the performances were sold out three days in advance and that even the critics had not managed to get hold of tickets. Yet his outburst was not only about the physical exclusion, but above all reflected a growing irritation at the enormous popularity of the Jordaan genre: the press saw nothing new, but the public couldn't get enough.

Thanks in part to the revue, the type of working-class woman from Amsterdam or Rotterdam thus became increasingly prominent in Solder's oeuvre. Her performances in the various forms of entertainment (variety, revue, cabaret, and cinema) further indicate that she was flexible in her profession and knew how to adapt perfectly to the demands of historical shifts. In addition, because of the Jordaan revue, Solser was faced with a division of opinion between the press and the public which must have confronted her with a choice. For no matter how much ridicule would later follow her films, she chose to entertain the public in her own way, so that even an otherwise negative criticism from 1924 concluded with: 'but she makes the audience, her audience, laugh'.<sup>26</sup>

## 1921-1928-1935: Kee and Bet go to the movies

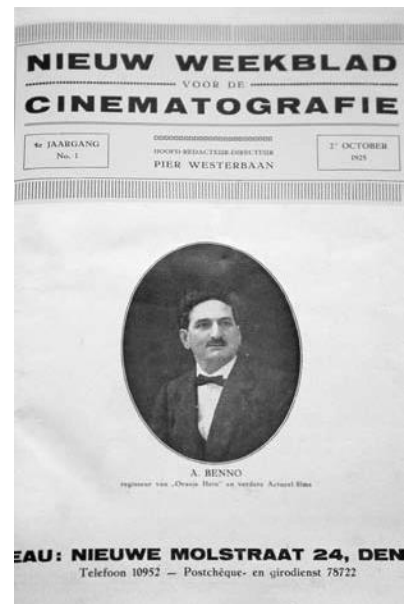
Given her professional flexibility, Adriënné Solder's move to film in 1921 was not really a surprise. For even though the Jordaan genre was far from extinct and the greatest shifts in the entertainment world had already taken place, changes were still taking place at the end of the 1910s which Solser was able to respond to. After all, cinema attendance was becoming increasingly important in nightlife, and the character of the revue was also changing, as satire and persiflage were increasingly having to make room for show and dance (and as Solser herself had already observed, *it* was not suitable for a calf parade!) Furthermore, a popular character like the Bet character no longer fitted in the cabaret.<sup>27</sup> It is true that other actors had already acted in front of the camera, but mainly in dramas and with varying success. Until 1921, silent film had barely made use of the huge contingent of comedians in the Netherlands.

The state of affairs in Dutch film production at the time that Solser undertook her film adventures adds another dimension. Dutch film had a bright future behind it,' Ansje van Beuse- kom aptly summarized in her book *Kunst en Amusement*.<sup>28</sup> That future had come to an end during the war, in which a national film pro- gramme was set up.

This led to the creation of a production which proved to be both ambitious and short-lived. The ambitious one was that they wanted to make artistic dramas after famous works from theatre and literature for the international market; the short-lived one meant that, when the Filmfabriek Hollandia ran into serious financial and organizational problems in 1923, it seemed to be the end of Dutch film production. In the early 1920s, every new initiative to revive Dutch film was warmly welcomed, but at the same time, it was also measured against professional, financial and ~~intonly~~ unrealised ambitions. It was in this climate that Adriënné Solser began her collaboration with the film producer, director and distributor Alex Benno.

### Double performance

Alex Benno had worked as an impresario in popular theatre and as an employee at the Filmfabriek Hollandia in the 1910s.<sup>29</sup> When he conceived of laying a solid financial basis for a new film production in the Netherlands, he chose the most popular theatre genre up to that point, the Jordaan genre. And one of the



Portrait of Alex Benno on the front page of the *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, a trade magazine for the film industry, on the occasion of the release of *ORANJE HEIN*, based on Herman Bouber's play of the same name. Source: Filmmuseum Amsterdam

## KEE EN JANUS NAAR PARIJS



Een verbaasd succes heeft op 't oogrubik in de Passage Bioscoop te Amsterdam de film „Kee en Janus naar Parijs“ van de reis naar België. Scenario en regie zijn ook ditmaal weer van den heer A. Benno, maar ditmaal he-  
 „The Dutch Film Co.“, de opvolger van de „Hollandsche“ te Haarlem. We geven uit dit product van  
 hier eenige afbeeldingen. Boven links is de kennismaking van Kee met Janus II, na den dood van Janus I. Onder  
 de ceremoniemeester een speech houdt. In den midden links zijn ze op hun huwelijksreis in de Moulin Rouge  
 onder suggestie brengt en ze een Jordaanse laat uitvoeren. Rechts ziet men de apachenleider, waar de  
 apachenmeisje verkledt ook het kind van de rekening wordt. Beneden links ontmoeten Kee en Janus elkaar  
 politie-commissaris. Rechts ontwaakt Kee na een bescheiden droom, waarin ze van den Esfellore

star actress of the genre was Adriënné Solser.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, she had already played a supporting role in his short film *De droom van hadt-je-maar* (1921). Benno also cast well-known genre comedians for the male leads, such as Kees Prujs, a comedian and popular actor, and Piet Köhler, one of the best-loved operetta and revue comedians of the 1910s, who had also played film roles. This is how the two films *Kee and Janus* came about, based on scenes by Benno himself: *Kee and Janus to Berlin* (1923) and *Kee and Janus to Paris* (1924). Solser plays the role of Kee Mol, 'the purebred Jordaan woman from Willemsstraat',<sup>31</sup> who, together with her husband Janus, makes Berlin and Paris unsafe. As far as we know, neither of these films has been preserved, but the reviews show that Adriënné Solser ~~acted~~ <sup>adopted</sup> the form that she would also use for her own beta- ves: namely, that she not only played the lead role on the screen, but also personally accompanied the screenings with spoken dialogue, singing and dancing. This double performance by the actress proved extremely lucrative. Because when Benno was once again questioned about these "so-called comedies which consist only of a series of insipid "comic situations" strung together,"<sup>32</sup> he defended his choice with the words: "It may not have been a success from an artistic point of view, but it certainly was a success from a ~~financial~~ <sup>financial</sup> point of view."<sup>33</sup> And few of his colleagues could say the same at the time. Although he continued without Solser, he was to remain active throughout the 1920s in the production, direction and distribution of Jordaan plays. What I find admirable about Adriënné Solser is that she was able to integrate film into her performances through her double performances, and at the same time to use her talent and experience as a character humorist.

## Eureka!

Why Adriënné Solser decided to start her own film production company remains a guess due to a lack of documentation, but it is certain that she also kept the distribution of the films that were made under her supervision in her own hands. She did have assistance in things that she had no experience with or understanding of. She worked with scriptwriters and co-directors and left the business management of the Hollando-Belgica Film Company to her. "Eureka" to her son André Boesnach. Thus, between 1924 and 1928, four beta- tive films were made, with again the most important guarantee of success being that Solser played her double role on the screen and on the stage.

*Left: The public magazine Weekblad Cinema en Theater (no. 155, 1923) gave a summary in image and writing of the highlights from KEE AND JANUS NAAR PARIJS. Because, as far as is known, the film has been lost, this impression is of great informative value for the contemporary researcher. Source: Filmmuseum Amsterdam*

Even in contemporary reviews there are remarks on the cinematographic quality of the films, especially on the acting, although Solder's performances were always praised. However, the most enlightening reactions in retrospect are those in which Solder's approach was fully appreciated, because they offer an insight into forms of reception which were apparently also common at the time. For example, the *Nieuw weekblad voor de cinematografie* announced in response to *bet trekt de* 100,000:

Adriënne Solser has no intention of creating a work of art. She doesn't think about it for a moment. When she makes a film, the question for her is how to keep the audience entertained for a couple of hours, so that they can laugh heartily for once, so that they can completely lose their minds. (...) The humorist Adrienne Solser wants to make people laugh (...) and she doesn't go much further than that. *That is why we have to look at this film in a completely different way than at any other film.* You come to see Adriënne Solser, maybe even more to hear her. Because she has made a name for herself in her interpretation of this genre (...) She is the juicy Jordanian and she is all in. Every moment a new joke pops through the air and every time it shows how great her contact with the public is. (...) her comic power does not wane for a moment, and that is the explanation for the full house every night.<sup>34</sup>

This review defends Solser's idea of film against accusations of a lack of artistic ambition and thus points to a parting of the ways as with the Jordaan revue. And again, the public couldn't get enough of it. The fact that Adriënne Solser did not make more *Bet* films was therefore not due to a decline in their popularity, but to a tragic coincidence: in 1928, André Boesnach died unexpectedly of peritonitis, which meant that the "Eureka" company ran into serious organisational and financial problems, and Solser herself was left completely devastated. The popularity of the films even reached into the first half of the 1930s, when Solser picked up where he left off and toured the country for three years with two *beta*-films.<sup>35</sup> This is all the more remarkable when you consider that this was precisely the period in which the sound film was introduced in the Netherlands, and became widely accepted.<sup>36</sup> But Adriënne Solder's double act still worked.

*Right: The images from BET, DE KONINGIN VAN DE JORDAAN in Weekblad Cinema en Theater (no. 44, 1924) mainly give an impression of the outing to Scheveningen of Bet and her husband Hein. The still with the donkeys (in the middle) and the still with Bet who has collapsed through the bed and ended up in the bathtub (bottom right) refer to situations in which Solser as Bet makes fun of her size. Source: Filmmuseum Amsterdam*



# Bet, de KONINGIN

VAN DE JORDAAN

BET STRIK, bijgenaamd

"De Koningin van de Jordaan" heeft nu al 26 jaar op de Nieuwmarkt te Amsterdam gestaan, een feit, dat haar volgers niet onopgemerkt voorbij kunnen laten gaan; zij versieren haar stalletje en kunnen haar klokslag vier uur halen met een volgepropte jan piezier vol Jordanners en brengen haar naar het feestzaal op de Rozenkracht, waar de pret eerst recht begint. Ook de krant is daar aanwezig in den vorm van een reporter van "Het Sufferdje", die Bet komt interviewen, maar als ze eens een dansje met den reporter wil maken, ontsteekt haar echtgenoot klein in heiligen toorn. Den volgenden dag zegt Bet tegen haar man, dat ze een paar daagjes naar Scheveningen wil en met veel moeite vinden zij daar een onderdak in een derde-rangs hotel. Bet blijkt evenwel te zwaar voor de lichte hotelbedden en begint met door het hare heen te zakken, zoodat ze naar een zolderkamer moeten verhuizen. Den volgenden dag genieten ze van al wat Scheveningen aan genoegens biedt en 's avonds bezoeken zij een cabaret. Daar komt Bet's medelijdend hart boven als



ze een klein meisje met bloemen ziet, dat overal wordt afgewezen. En als het kind haar vertelt, dat haar moeder ernstig ziek is, weet Bet raad: zij draagt een echt Jordansch stukje voor en spoedig is bloemenmandje van de kleine uitverkocht. In het hotel wacht hun een onaangename verrassing: van de badkamer is nu voor hen een slaapkamer gemaakt en in plaats van in bed komt Bet in het bad terecht. De hotelier zegt hun kamer op en ze gaan maar weer naar Amsterdam terug, waar zij nog een bezoek aan den Artis brengen; thuisgekomen vinden ze hun heele huisje versierd en begint de pret nog eens tot Bet en Hein, door den slaap overmand, dromen van rijkdom en welde, totdat de werk-ker hen weer tot de werkelijkheid terug roept.

Bovenstaande film, die ter geïnschuld van den 40 jarigen tooneelloopbaan van Adrienne Solser is gemaakt, die in de creatie van Bet al haar talenten tot hun recht kan doen komen, wordt in omloop gebracht door de „Hollando-Belgie's" film-onderneming.





*Due to the continuing success of BET, DE KONINGIN VAN DE JORDAAN, which had already been showing in cinemas for twelve months in October 1925, and the production of BET TREKT DE 100,000, Adriënné Solser's portrait now also graces the front page of the trade journal Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie.*

## The BET movies

The stories are short and have an episodic structure. In *Bet, de koningin van de Jordaan*, a fishwife is celebrating her jubilee - which is of course a nod to Solser's own jubilee - and she and her husband take trips to Artis and Scheveningen. *Bet* and Hein behaved like a kind of *vison* on a journey, but in the end they were only too glad to return home. In *Bet naar de Olympiade* a sturdy baker's wife prepares to take part in the international sports event which was indeed held in Amsterdam in 1928. What Solser exploits comically in this text is that these were the first Olympic Games for which women were admitted as participants. Therefore a simple but topical reason was sufficient to create a series of "comic situations", which arose from stupid behavior and lies on his part, accidents on her part, and quarrels and reconciliation scenes on both sides.

The *Bet* character is, of course, a Jordaan caricature: bossy and with her heart on the sleeve, but that heart is made of gold. She is also enterprising and afraid of nothing and no one, and likes to celebrate.

bundle of feasts. Her husband Hein is the prototype of that 'mishmash of good-heartedness, "ponteneur" and "lick-me-vessie"' which, according to the theatre critic Barba-rossa, was so striking in the Jordaan caricatures devised by Lion Solser.<sup>37</sup> In Solser's films Hein is also under the thumb of his wife, who is constantly correcting him and giving him hell. Solser also takes many opportunities to mock her obesity, whereby her flexibility and agility are striking, even when you realise that she was well over fifty. In the *Olympiad* film she also expands this theme into persiflages on popular theatre and film genres such as the revue with its parades of leggy girls and the American serial films with their youthful and fearless heroines.

*Right: In BET NAAR DE OLYMPIADE Solser perverted the fact that the Olympic Games of 1928 took place in Amsterdam and that women were allowed to participate for the first time. By including activities which had nothing to do with the Olympiad, such as those of a light sailor or a firewoman, she simultaneously gave a parody of professions new to women at the time. In addition, the film contains a 'parade of calves' derived from the revue, of which the central photo shows the end, with the characteristic staircase in the background. Source: Filmmuseum Amsterdam*



# BET NAAR DE



# OLYMPIADE



Mevrouw Adrienne Solser, heeft een nieuwe film aan de al reeds bekende Bet-serie toegevoegd. Evenals in de vorige films, vervult zij zelf de hoofdrol en maakt zij als amsterdamsche jordaansche alle mogelijke avonturen mede.

Wij zien Bet, die in den Haag toestemming vroeg om aan de olympiade deel te nemen, in training. In de kranten verschenen artikelen omtrent Bet's deelname. We zien haar te midden van beroeps-worstelaars flink oefenen. Als lichtmatroos in een mast klimmen. Doch ook het goede hart van Bet wordt in deze film op den voorgrond gebracht. Wanneer zij hoort, dat een arme oude koloniaal stervende is, spoedt zij zich naar zijn sponde, om te helpen, zooveel zij kan. Ook houdt zij dol veel van de hollandsche soldaten.

De marieners uft volle muziek voorop en Bet is er bij hoor!!! In een luxueus zwembad, bij een groote villa behoorende, beoefent zij de zwemsport. Ook traint zij zich in tennis, voetbal en atletische sporten, want geen moeite is haar te veel, om haar doel te bereiken, namelijk in het één of ander „wereldkampioene" te worden. Doch plots wordt Bet wakker, en merkt dat dit alles slechts een heerlijke droom was. Deze film is de eerste die in mevrouw Solser's eigen studio te Schiedam is vervaardigd. Oorspronkelijk zou deze rolprent onder regie van haar zoon, wijlen den heer André Boesnach tot stand komen, helaas stierf deze jeugdige energieke regisseur, hetgeen voor zijn moeder een zeer zware slag was. De heer Theo Frenkel heeft zijn werk overgenomen.

E. W.



Indien U meent HET BESTE  
gezien te hebben, dat er op  
filmgebied bestaat, dan heeft de  
**WILTON METRO GOLDWYN**  
altijd NOG BETERE FILMS

Mevr. Adrienne Solser wordt in deze film wederom in verschillende typen op het doek getracht en toont opnieuw haar veelzijdigheid.

All this leads to a carefree malice, very physical and very direct, but therefore also uninhibited and good-natured. It is the humor of people who do not feel elevated above those they persecute in any way. Moreover, the way in which these films make fun of women and man-woman relations is, in my opinion, timelessly funny.

### **The end of Solder's career: 1935-1943**

Some texts in the verse books indicate that Solser also performed as a humorist in the two and a half decades of the 1930s, but I have not been able to investigate how frequently and for how long. During the war, she lived in Amsterdam, despite the fact that she was Jewish. However, in the advertisements for theatre performances in the *Joodsch Weekblad*, her name does not appear, perhaps because she no longer performed, but it is also possible that she did not want to identify herself as a Jew. According to her obituary, she travelled by train to Doetinchem in 1943, and broke her thigh at the station. Almost recovered after a stay of eight weeks in hospital, she died during a final treatment. She was still so well-known and so loved that the newspapers (censored by the occupying forces) not only reported her death, but also nine months earlier her seventieth birthday.

### **Definition of career and oeuvre**

Solder's comedies may have been out of step with the ambitious Dutch film production of the 1910s, but not with the more occasional and partly local market-oriented production of the 1920s. They were also in keeping with the cinematic exploitation of the Jordaan theme, as initiated with the jantjes and the kee and janus films, and then continued by her and Alex Benno. Nor is the marginalization of Solser's work in film history justified by repeating the argument that her comedies did not help film in a cinematographic sense. Adriënné Solser had no such ambitions, and the audience she addressed had no problem with this. Her career shows on the one hand a striking adaptability to new genres and media, and on the other hand a remarkable constancy in the popular type which she plays and which she transfers from the popular theatre to the bio-spectacle. The Bet character enabled her to develop and use her talents as a humorist to the full, offered her the opportunity for self-mockery and had not yet passed its sell-by date after two decades. She also continued the form of her performances: solo and live from the start, she even managed to turn every film in which she starred into one big Adriënné Solser act.

Seen in this light, her double performances on and in front of the screen were indeed her own 'creations' - literally and figuratively.

This observation raises questions about the forms of production and reception, in popular theatre and silent cinema, to which the public was accustomed and still attached in the 1920s and 1930s. I will focus on two related questions, namely on the one hand the popularity of the Jordaan genre and its various variants, and on the other hand the combination of film with live performances and the different traditions in this. Both helped to shape the reception conditions for Solder's double performances.

### The Jordaan genre on stage

Amsterdam characters became popular just before the turn of the century and were ubiquitous in revues, comic operettas and so-called *folk plays* during the first decades of the twentieth century. According to historian Jacques Klöters the cult of the Jordaan genre was initiated in 1897 with the Amsterdam characters 'Pietje Puck' and his wife 'Zwarte Kardoes' in August Reyding's revue 'Luilekkerland'.<sup>38</sup> Klöters' colleague Dries Krijn places the characters in the old tradition of the Amsterdam couple Thomasvaer and Pieterneel, who had already been appearing for a century in a comic opera performed after the traditional New Year's Eve performance of Vondel's 'Geysbrecht van Amstel' in Amsterdam's Stadsschouwburg. The role of Thomasvaer and Pieterneel was to comment on the events of the past year from a local perspective, while Pietje Puck, according to Krijn, was rather portrayed as a womanizer, loafer, and hustler.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, his character was well-liked by the Jordanians, as is shown in an anecdote recorded in the necrology of the actor who played him, Jan Grootveld:

"Cockaigne" especially attracted the Jordanians. And one day Grootveld was invited as a guest by the Jordanians. "I was invited - he told - to come to the Westerstraat. The good people of Jordan enjoyed my Pietje Puck so much, that they took me away in a carriage to a pub in Westerstraat, where the twelve of them received me. They wanted to give me some kind of honour, the good fellows, and then they gave me a party all afternoon."<sup>40</sup>

*On the next pages: Also in BET ZIT IN DE PENARIE, Solder's third film for her own production company 'Eureka' (and now lost), trips are made to other places and jokes are made about Bet's posture. Weekblad Cinema en Theater (no 197, 1927) devoted two pages to promoting the film. Source: Filmmuseum Amsterdam*





Er zijn niet heel veel hollandsche films. Daarvoor zijn vele redenen, die we zoo dikwijls in deze kolommen hebben weergegeven, dat we er thans niet weer op zullen terugkomen. Een paar onzer landgenooten „houden er den moed in“ en een dezer is Adrienne Solser, die een speciaal genre voor zich heeft gereserveerd, n.l. 't zoogenaamde Jordaan-genre. Ze is bezig een Bet-serie te maken. Dat wil zeggen een aantal films, waarin steeds Bet uit de Jordaan de hoofdrol speelt. Een nieuwe film in dit genre is bijna voor vertooning gereed gekomen, een tweeweekse serie-film „Bet zit in de Penarie“, welke film door de Eureka te Rotterdam in circulatie wordt gebracht.

In deze film beleeft tante Bet weer tal van avonturen.

Bet heeft in het hartje van de Jordaan een café. Bij het glazenwasschen flirt zij met haar vriend Pitouto, den kellner van den overkant. Een paar kwajongens krijgen hier erg in en nemen de gelegenheid waar om Bet nat te spuiten. Bet woedend geworden, gooit de jongens haar pantoffel naar het hoofd maar o jé, deze komt terecht in het gezicht van haar



Hoe lang nog



Bet de „Indlane“

aanstaanden verloofde Gerrit die juist van zijn boot komt. Hevig geschrokken troont Bet Gerrit mee naar binnen om hem weer op zijn verhaal te brengen. Piet, een kameraad van Gerrit, komt met een luidruchtig gezelschap eens de bloemetjes buiten zetten in het café van Bet en als Gerrit zich bij het gezelschap aansluit als dit weer vertrekt, blijft Bet achter aan een vreeselijke jalouzie ten prooi. Maar een ander bezoek volgt en wel dat van Gerrit's moeder, die zich over het leven van plezier van haar zoon komt beklagen. Bet met haar goeie hart biedt moeder Netje en haar dochtertje Rikie aan bij haar te komen inwonen. Gerrit en Piet belanden met hun gezelschap op het terras van het café waar Pitouto kellner is geworden, nadat zijn baas, die tegenover Bet woont, hem had ontslagen en Gerrit geraakt in een wat al te luidruchtige stemming. Hij wordt bijna door een auto overreden, maar belandt weer in het café van Bet, waar hij ruzie met zijn moeder krijgt. Het beste is, dat Gerrit eerst maar eens uitslaapt; hij vertrekt met zijn plunjezak naar de haven en legt zich te sla-



Mevr. Beekman en Pitouto



Allemaal op de fiets



Een zware hijsch





Bij d'r koetje



Bet heeft 'n malheur



Pitouto en Beekman in actie

pen, terwijl hij in zijn droomen zijn laatste leelijke daad tegen zijn moeder weer ziet. Den volgenden morgen haalt Bet hem weer binnen en berouwvol belooft hij zijn moeder beterschap. Ook Pitouto komt Bet bezoeken en geeft haar een mooi armbandhorloge cadeau, waarover Gerrit niet erg gesticht is. Als hij woedend wil weglopen, loopt hij een vrouw tegen het lijf, die hem sommeert de achterstallige huur van zijn moeders oude woning te betalen. Pitouto lacht Gerrit uit, wat Bet toch niet goed kan hebben. Zij kiest partij voor Gerrit en geeft Pitouto zijn geschenk terug.

Rikie wordt op boodschappen uitgestuurd en buiten lastig gevallen door straatjongens. Gerrit en Pitouto bemoeien zich er mee en in een ogenblik ontstaat een formele vechtpartij, waarbij Gerrit zoo verwond wordt, dat hij naar het ziekenhuis wordt gebracht. Maar ook aan deze misère komt een eind en Gerrit keert weer genezen naar Bet's etablissement terug. Blij over den goeden afloop, schenkt Bet haar geliefde gaww een borrel in, maar deze heeft geworpen geen druppel drank meer te sullen drinken, een voornemen, waarover zijn moeder zeer verheugd is.

Eenige dagen later varen Piet en Gerrit weer uit en Pitouto maakt druk werk van Bet, heeft echter niet veel succes. Na eenige maanden komt de boot terug... zonder Gerrit, die na een ruzie in een bar te Folkestone spoorloos verdwenen is. Het gevolg is, dat zijn moeder ziek wordt.



Wie niet lopen kan, die wordt gedragen



Vlak voor het station te Middelburg

Op zekeren dag krijgt Bet bezoek van een nicht uit Zeeland, Simone, die haar uit naam van haar moeder komt vragen of zij haar krachten voortaan niet aan haar boerderij zou willen wijden, daar de beide vrouwen het niet meer af kunnen. Bet's hart trekt wel naar de groene dreef, maar zij wil Gerrit's zieke moeder niet in den steek laten. Moeder Netje kwijnt steeds meer weg en sterft ten slotte zonder ooit meer iets van Gerrit gehoord te hebben. Bet is door al deze droeve ervaringen lang de vroolijke Frans van vroeger niet meer en het café begint te verlopen. Met graagte neemt zij dus het voorstel van Pitouto aan om met hem mee te gaan naar het circus van zijn broer in Groningen. Bet en Pitouto geven daar 's avonds een "danse excentrique" en Rikie wordt solo-danseres. Deze wordt echter ernstig ziek en sterft. Als Bet dan weer door haar nicht gevraagd wordt in Zeeland te komen, gaat zij...

Na een armoedig zwerversleven in Folkestone komt Gerrit weer in Amsterdam terug en verneemt dat zijn moeder gestorven is. Bij verdere nasporingen belandt hij op de kermis in Assen, waar hij Pitouto aantreft en hoort dat Bet in Zeeland is, waar het circus nu ook heengaat. Te Middelburg aangekomen, stappen zij samen naar de boerderij, waar Gerrit zijn Bet weervindt en Pitouto zich met Simone verlooft. De gelukkige oplossing wordt door de twee paartjes met een allergezelligsten avond gevierd.

**FOTO'S VAN  
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The Jordaan audience was known to be enthusiastic but critical, because they never laughed out of politeness, but did come in large numbers to see the roles and pieces in which they were portrayed and performed.<sup>41</sup> The degree of approval from this particular audience was therefore also an important criterion in the reviews for measuring the quality of what was shown. For example, in 1900 a review wrote about the comic opera "n Amsterdamsche Hartjesdag", in which Adriënné Solser also performed:

That there are still people who enjoy a joke, we saw it on Saturday night, not only in the reality presented on stage, but it was also proved by experience by the people in the audience. There was a lot of hearty laughter from the audience...'.<sup>42</sup>

Hartjesdag was a typical Amsterdam affair, a dress-up party and drinking bouts for men and women on the eve of the funfair in September, and was also celebrated exuberantly in the working-class neighbourhoods of the city long after the funfair had been abolished. The comic opera about it was performed in the Frascati Theatre on Plantage Middenlaan (now Studio Desmet). The Planagebuurt was a real theatre district for the lighter genre, with the Schouwburg Stoel en Spree (later the Plantage-Schouwburg in the Plantage Fransche laan, now Henri Polaklaan) and the Artis-Schouwburg (later the Hollandsche Schouwburg), which mainly drew their audiences from the neighbouring Jewish neighbourhood and from the Jordaan. In the 1910s and 1920s, these theatres and, from 1913 onwards, the Rozen-theater, were the main venues in Amsterdam for the Jordaan genre. More and more *popular plays* were performed here, dramas and comedies based on recognisability, about Amsterdammers, their dialect, their humour and their behaviour. Around 1900, Marius Spree of the Stoel and Spree theatre was the pivot of this movement, and in the second half of the 1910s this was Herman Bouber, whose plays were performed in the Hollandsche Schouwburg.

From 1897 to 1912, Marius Spree was not only the co-director of the Stoel and Spree theatre, but also a celebrated comic actor and the author of 'dramas from popular life', which he based on short stories by Justus van Maurik, the chronicler of the daytime and night-time life of Amsterdam at that time. In 1902, Teun de nachtwacht had its premiere:

A sad story ..., while the 'aelwarigheid' [foolishness - off] and comedy of the neighbours makes one roar with laughter. (...) Those present took such immense pleasure in these scenes that they started cheering while they were playing and laughed so loudly and generously that they could no longer hear what the actors were saying. They laughed their eyes out.<sup>43</sup>

The lively involvement of the public would continue to guide the Jordaan genre and must be particularly appealing to the actors, in addition to being a challenge.

have been possible. Perhaps that is why Adriënné Solser could not resist appearing again and again in the flesh.

Spree's folk plays were thus based on observation of life in the city. They were spoken in Amsterdam dialect, social drama was illustrated with comic scenes, and no matter how much quarrelling there was, everything was finally resolved. Because of their recognisability, their titles were also derived from the characters who populated them: "Jan Smees", "Mottige Janus" and "Rooie Sien" were still considered to be prototypes of the genre. Moreover, the epithet of the female protagonist Kee in 'Jan Smees' was 'The Queen of the Jordaan', a title which Adriënné Solser was to borrow to 'crown' her own film *Bet*, as shown above.

Bouber's plays, based on the books by Israël Querido and directed by Nap de la Mar, were also praised for the striking way they portrayed life and characters in the Jordaan, as Wolf wrote about 'Bleeke Bet':

The art is to remain "real" on stage. And that is what Bouber and De la Mar have understood! Their sketch of Jordan is a reflection of real Jordanian life - they have created types as they *must* exist. (...) And the "event" is also developed logically. There is nothing "made", nothing "twisted" in the data - we can imagine that everything happens like this...<sup>44</sup>

Just like Spree, Bouber also gave his plays titles with common nicknames, including *mooie neel: de trots van de jordan* (1916), *bleeke bet en linke louwtje* (1918) en *oranje hein* (1919). In these 'Jordaan sketches' too, the drama was lightened with comic moments and all conflicts were resolved at the end. Yet Bouber added an element that further increased the audience's merriment: dance numbers and sing-alongs between the acts.<sup>45</sup> According to Rido, he had borrowed the idea for this from the Jordaan comedies by the Ensemble Solser and Hesse, who had in turn been inspired by Jan Grootveld in the role of Pietje Puck, whose refrain and dance number had been the 'schlagers' of the revue of which he had been the main character. The idea was also used in the first film adaptation of Bouber's *de jantjes* in 1922, in which Adriënné Solser played the supporting role of Na Druppel.<sup>46</sup> It is this tradition of dance numbers and sing-alongs that Adriënné Solser would continue in the cinema.

### The Ensemble and the genre 'Solser and Hesse'

The comedies that Solser and Hesse produced every year between 1910 and 1915 are important for more reasons than just the sing-alongs, in order to place Adriënné Solser's film oeuvre. In particular, the formal aspects of the narrative structure and the female protagonists of her farces show more affinity.

with those of her younger brother than with the dramatic *folk plays* of Spree and Bouber. And since even less can be found in history books about the 'Solser en Hesse genre' than about their predecessor Spree and their successor Bouber, a more detailed discussion of them is in order here.

Lion Solser and Piet Hesse were actors at the Plantage Schouwburg before they started touring the province as a comic duo in 1897 and formed the Ensemble Solser and Hesse around 1900. Piet Hesse was the business director and Lion Solser the artistic director who devised and directed the *sketches* and farces with which they and their wives performed. Unlike Hesse, Solser was not a native of Amsterdam and therefore left the writing of the dialogues to experienced writers of the Jordaan genre, including the aforementioned Rido and Tony Schmitz. He learned the accent and mannerisms of the Jordanians through extensive observation at markets and in cafes, where he got the ideas for costumes, facial expressions and behavior:

In this way all the Amsterdam folk plays and the characters played in them by Solser and Hesse have become a pure and accurate imitation of reality, and can be compared to some stories by Justus van Maurik. In their play they strongly showed the sensitivity, the humanity and the sacrifice of the little fellows, and the jollity over all. Lion Solser's creations showed his sympathy for the people and the pleasure he took in their actions. While playing he became completely absorbed by them and their actions became art.<sup>47</sup>

Between 1900 and 1910, this ensemble was one of the most sought-after attractions in the variety temples of the major cities, while they also continued to tour in the ~~proins~~ The enormous success of their parody of Vondel's "Adam in Bal- lingschap" led them to stage a so-called "fairground piece" every year from 1910 onwards, a farce that lasted the whole evening and had Jordanian ~~proins~~ These were extended versions of the *sketches* with which they had performed in the variety theatre, and were performed in the theatres that specialized in popular plays, such as the Hollandsche Schouwburg in the Plantage district and the Rozen-theater on the Rozengracht. In 1915, at the peak of their success, this production came to an end when Lion Solser took matters into his own hands. The necrologies praised the comedian for his innovations:

After having given a new genre to variety, [Solser] has also brought something new and unique to theatre acting. The comic scenes that he played with his faithful Hesse have grown into plays, one-acters and also pieces for the whole evening, in which he performed with a complete company, always in a female role of his genre and with Hesse as his partner.<sup>48</sup>

As we have seen, Adriënne Solser also developed her "songs" into longer acts, and she also ensured that the genre migrated between different forms of entertainment. The Ensemble's first "fairground piece", "Have you seen the child?" was played in the "main street" of the Jordaan, the Willemsstraat, and was about the excitement of the people, especially Ka the fishwife, when they heard that the royal procession to present the baby Princess Juliana to the people would be visiting the neighbourhood: "L. Solzer [sic] is a beauty of an Amsterdam fishwife, with all the humor which is typical of this genre in the past,"<sup>49</sup> wrote the critic of *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, referring to Spree. While in Boubert's Jor- daan pieces, because of the dramatic conflict, several female characters were always placed opposite each other,<sup>50</sup> in Solser and Hesse there was only one main female character, whose view and reaction to the events dominated the whole story. This was exactly the case for Adriënne Solser's Bet character. In addition, this first fairground play already contained an element that would also prove to be characteristic of the Solser en Hesse genre, namely a sensitive scene between all the merriment and foolishness: 'Mindful of the laughter and the tears, a touching song of a good woman in distress, for which the Jordanians immediately reach into their pockets'.<sup>51</sup> In the 'Solser en Hesse genre' the relationship between the comic and the dramatic was therefore exactly the other way round as it was with Spree and Boubert, and so the 'jolly over everything' would also define Adriënne Solser's farces. In 'Ga j'mee de erfenis de Oome Hein? Lion Solser played Mie the greengrocer's wife and Hesse her husband Dirk Vink, who together squander their uncle's modest inheritance in the city's entertainment centres. Like the films with and by Adriënne Solser, the pieces were not dramatic but episodic in structure, where a simple occasion was enough to present a series of farcical scenes. Lion Solser's last "creation" was again a Mie and again a fishwife, and according to the contemporary press this was such a success that the columnist for *De Theatergids* called it "the punch line of the season". His impressionistic description of it is delightful, despite the mockery which can be heard through it:

'Schellevis-Mie [sic], presented by Leon [sic] Solser with all the loveliness and goodness of heart and looseness of leg, that is on her. Behold her hip-swaying, Leon Solser! See her tango dance, Leon Solser! See her hand splash, Leon Solser, and see her scratch the scales of her fish, Leon Solser! See her in her finest fashion combination and in her brightest white jacket, Leon Solser! And tell me if she's not a credit to the fishwife guild, Leon Solser! Hear her voice, hear her tale! [...]

Well, Leon Solser deserves the honorary membership of the Free Fish Women's Association on Reformed Christian basis "De Weerbarstige Dobber".<sup>52</sup>



Weet je 't al van schellevisch-mie was performed a hundred times, even though the performance was repeatedly cancelled due to Lion Solder's progressive nervous disorder.<sup>53</sup> After his death, Piet Hesse's wife, Anna Hesse-Slauderof, took on the leading role and even chose the play to celebrate her 30th anniversary on the stage in 1916.<sup>54</sup> Just as the Ensemble Solser and Hesse had created their own variant of the *Jordaan* genre in the first half of the 1910s, so Adriënné Solser did with her farces in the 1920s.

### Combining film screening with performances

In the practice of the 1910s, film exhibition and performance were combined into more hybrid forms than the use of terms such as 'popular theatre' or 'cinema' would suggest. In the first place there were all kinds of establishments, from speciality theatres to cinemas, in whose programmes films and performances alternated. We have already seen that Solser regularly performed as a comedian in cinemas at least until the end of 1918. In addition to this, there was the phenomenon of explication, whereby someone explained the films shown next to or in front of the screen in such a way that the audience could easily pay attention. Solder's live performances with her films were also often called explication, but as I wanted to indicate with the description 'double performance', they went further than this. For this reason I have also looked at experiments with film projection and performances within separate, usually comical, 'numbers' in revues. And as I would like to argue, such traditions of mixed forms of film and performance offer a better insight into the public's appreciation of Solder's work than the reception of film *as* film - regardless of whether that film was understood as art or as entertainment.

### Explication

It is true that in the more prestigious cinemas and in drama productions, the narrator had been replaced by musical accompaniment around 1917, but even in the 1930s Solser's performances with her films were not seen as an anachronism. In the 1920s, people were still used to explanations, especially in comic films and in popular cinemas.<sup>55</sup> The discussion in the mid-1910s about the function of the explicator is enlightening in this regard. Whereas until 1913 he was mainly seen as an actor who had to empathize with what was being shown on the screen in order to dramatize thoughts, feelings and situations (there is only one known side), afterwards he preferred to act as a sort of narrator:

the actor [who had been the explicator, note A.F.] was increasingly confronted with the task of being the author as well, the situations created by the



descriptive titles were indicated in speaking form, and to make the figures come alive to the audience.<sup>56</sup>

This was partly the result of new acting styles in film, particularly from actresses such as Asta Nielsen and the Italian divas, whose playing made explanations or dramatization superfluous if not irritating. Not that Solser's acting on screen left anything to be desired in terms of clarity, but the comic content was of course only increased by texts full of jokes and well-timed witticisms. You could say that in her performances Solser allowed the two functions of the narrator and actor to coincide. This could explain why her work was even associated with the "talking film" or sound film: "So the beta-cinemas were actually the primary predecessors of the so-called "talking" film".<sup>57</sup> Even when sound films had become commonplace, this association still surfaced.<sup>58</sup> And although it can no longer be taken entirely literally, it does indicate that Solser's double performances were different from what one was used to seeing in an explicator. I also deduce from this that (part of) the public in the 1920s and 1930s had more open expectations about what a film screening could be than is usually assumed in the film industry and the film historiography.

### Film screening in the popular theatre

Film continued to be a part of variety programmes and revues until well into the 1910s. Since the introduction of film, these programmes had played a large part in bringing the new medicine to men - and women.<sup>59</sup> A fact that is often overlooked in film history is that film didn't disappear from these programmes after the emergence of cinemas that only showed film, around 1907. It's true that these cinemas only began to flourish after about three years,<sup>60</sup> but even after that, the 'film number' held a permanent place in the entertainment programmes until the war. This meant that the public not only saw film as an autonomous form of entertainment and art, but *also* as part of the popular theater culture of the early twentieth century. Because Adrienne Solser herself came from this theatre culture, it seems obvious to me that she also held this view and that she considered film to be an integral part of her acts and performances. For me, this is an extra argument for not using the term explication in her specific case, because her performances would otherwise be seen as an accompaniment to the film, instead of the other way round. This may seem nit-picking, but I think it is important, because it highlights Solser's continued success from a new angle. After all, what 'her' audience expected was not to be presented with film as an independent form of entertainment, but as an element of (popular) theatre that enhanced its entertainment value.

## Humorists in the cinema

Even longer than film remained part of entertainment programmes, performances by humorists remained fixed elements in regular cinema shows. Bordewijk and Van Beusekom have shown that this was a common ~~pract~~ in popular cinemas and in the provinces until after the advent of sound film.<sup>61</sup> My research into Solder's performances between film screenings subsequently shows that this practice was also widespread during the 1910s in cities such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam, where it could also be found in leading cinemas. In fact, the mixed offer of film screenings and live performances even seems to be a real programming formula which is also reflected in the names of the establishments. I would like to illustrate this with a few examples.

The Amsterdam 'Bioscope Theatre' had a mixed offer of films and performances from its opening in 1907 until at least 1922. However, the ~~typo~~ in the advertisements shows that the relationship between the two was changing. Initially, the films were announced in the same way as in the variety show, i.e. not with their individual titles, but as a 'number' called 'The Royal Bioscope'. At the same time, the live performances were announced separately and moreover in capital letters and in larger type than the films. From 1911 onwards, more and more film titles appeared in the advertisements, but the humorists were mentioned by name and larger. Around 1916, the ratio had changed to such an extent that the programme contained more films than live performances, but it was not until 1918 that the typography in the advertisements changed: then the film ~~ts~~ were placed larger than the names of the comedians. Nevertheless, the "Bioscope Theater" was a premiere cinema, where it was said that the programming was "pioneering and authoritative", and where new genres and new stars were introduced.<sup>62</sup> In my opinion, it can be deduced from this programming strategy and typography that even years after the film had proved itself as a self-contained form of entertainment, comedians and their performances continued to make the programs more attractive and thus to contribute to the acceptance of film by their audiences. Because, as I will show below, the Bioscope Theatre was a forerunner, but soon it would no longer be an exception with this programming strategy.

Between 1912 and 1916, cinemas were opened in both Rotterdam and Amsterdam with a similar range of programs. The first in Rotterdam was the Thalia-Bioscoop-Theater, which was quickly followed by the Apollo- tion, the Imperial, the Bioscope Americain and the Olympia. In Amsterdam, the concept was picked up by the Albert Frères, who called their mixed programmes the "Bio-sopic Cabaret Artistique", in which Adriënné Solser also performed in 1912. In the following year, at least four so-called "Cinema-Variété Theatres" opened in Amsterdam, and they promoted their mixed programmes. This was particularly true of the Tip-Top theatre,

the Panopticon Theatre, the Princes Theatre and the Rose Theatre. The Rose Theatre even advertised its films as equivalent to live performances in 1914 and 1915:

**Rose Theatre, Rozengracht**  
 Today and the next 8 o'clock.  
 Cinema: The City of New York. Nature  
 Recordings  
 Clown CUSTO from the Circus Carré.  
 Main movie: "The Sins of the  
 Fathers" Asta Nielsen in the leading  
 role.  
 Duo Kapper sings the Cavaleria Rusticana  
 The Busto's Violin-Virtuoso  
 Break.  
 Adrienne Solser  
 In their [sic] creation "Ka as suffragette"  
 The ruse of Pierrot  
 Opéra comique in 1 bedr. d. Emil v.d. Eijnden  
 Cinema: Patachon has the spit.  
 Marsch finale.

Sunday from 2 to 4  
**Grand Matinee**  
 With the cooperation of all specialties.  
 Every Wednesday Children's and Family show  
 with specially chosen progr.

*Advertisement as  
 in De  
 Theatergids, jg.  
 8 nr. 108,  
 January 10, 1914*

The prominent presence of specialties and humorists in the programmes was partly reinforced by the war, which reduced the supply of films, but also blocked the international exchange of variety artists, which meant that Dutch humorists had even more opportunities. Nevertheless, they were still in demand for film programmes when the situation normalised. For example, in June 1917 Adriënné Solser was a soubrette in the Nieuw Olympia Theater in Rotterdam, her performance was programmed after an episode of the serial film *Homunculus*, and her name was printed in the advertisement in a font and size that were similar to those of the film.<sup>63</sup> The same thing happened, for example, in December 1918, but then with other titles and other artists. It was not until the early 1920s that the performances were seen as competing with film screenings: 'The film comes first, even if the artist who is engaged as an attraction is still so famous'.<sup>64</sup> The advice was to keep the performance short - 'only ten minutes'<sup>65</sup> - so that the audience would not think they were in a variety show and could still recover from the experience.

the strenuous viewing that film was supposed to entail. The article confirms the long-term attraction of the performances of humorists in the cinema and the importance of their contribution to the cinema programme. In this function, Adriënné Solser was certainly not alone and can therefore be seen as a prototype.<sup>66</sup> At the same time this also means that the public, and certainly the working-class public which was so important for Solser, remained familiar with the combination of film screening and live performances in one programme throughout the whole period of the silent film, and even afterwards.

### Comedy film tradition in the revue

A very special place in my research into the traditions on which the reception of Solder's films may have relied is occupied by the experiments with film and performance in the context of revues. In her article "De dubbele sal- to tussen *De nieuwe prikkel* en de jantjes", Ansje van Beusekom described numerous examples of this and showed that such hybrid forms were extremely common during the 1910s.<sup>67</sup> Because the revue was basically a comic genre, I would even go so far as to trace here the traces of a comic film tradition that is only scarcely to be found in the regular film production of the 1910s, but that was just as authentically Dutch as Adriënné Solser's film productions. I will illustrate this with two examples. The first example is a 'song' by the artist duo Chrétienni and Louissette, which caused a furore not only in the Netherlands, but also in Germany, England and the United States between 1910 and 1916. In this song, 'Van Boerin tot Artiste', the duo had their performance preceded by a so-called 'holfilm', a comic chase film that they had filmed themselves and in which they also played the pursued and the pursuer. The filmed parts have been preserved, and together with the reviews it is therefore possible to compare the completely reconstructed.<sup>68</sup>

In the filmed part we are introduced to Kees and Trijn from Volendam. To Kees' dismay, Trijn is convinced that she has the talent to become an internationally celebrated variety artist. While she was dancing a typical Volendam dance in the street, she was indeed "discovered" by an impresario. Kees tried in vain to prevent her from leaving the village (and therefore him). Using every means of transport that crosses her path, Trijn races to the big city and abroad. In every town she also makes her entrance into a variety theatre. Kees has difficulty not only in keeping up with her but also in entering the theatre. But each time he manages to outwit the attendants. The recordings of the entrance to the theatre always corresponded to the theatre where their performance was scheduled and concluded the filmed part. The part of the song played live then began with the whirling entry of Kees and Trijn into the theatre.

hall, after which Chrétienni played a series of conductors and Louisette did a Spanish, French or Italian dance that brought her stormy applause.

An intriguing aspect of the film parts is that they contain shots of passers-by who are watching the scenes being shot. They also look straight into the camera, as if they are curious about what is happening behind it. On the one hand this has the effect of creating the impression of the "authenticity" of the filming (as opposed to the staged aspect), and on the other hand the spectators in the audience seem to see themselves on the screen. In this way, an idea of recognisability was evoked which was part of the *folk plays*. In Adrienne Solder's farces, too, spectators can be seen looking unabashedly into the camera, with the same dual effect. In terms of film aesthetics, actors who look into the camera were long out of the question in the 1920s, but with Solser it was in line with the requirement of the Jordaan genre that the audience could identify with what was being offered, and now also if they were not from the Jordaan.

A similar 'number' was devised by Rido in 1911 in his revue *amsterdam op hol!* for the star actor of Variété Flora, Isidore Zwaaf. Because Rido, in addition to being the author of Dutch revues, was also the author of a history of the genre in the 1950s, I quote his description of the performance here:

At the start of the revue, the audience was in shock because the main performer, Isidore Zwaaf, had not yet arrived. At the end of the day, director Boedels called Zwaaf's home. The film then showed Zwaaf snoozing on his sofa at home. He was sleepy and took the phone in his hand. It then turned out that he was under the impression that the revue would not be shown until the following evening. He hurriedly got dressed and ran out the door. All sorts of accidents occurred during this scurrying about. He knocked over a ladder, was chased by a biting dog, ran into an open bridge and was hoisted up with it. In his desperation he gaped at a car "en pas sant", during which he was chased by the owner, the police and a growing crowd. He was trapped with another car, but managed to escape from the working arm of the police just in time. So he finally ran into Amstelstraat, where the director, the director and some controllers were waiting for him in front of the door of Flora, beckoning him. Then he came running into the theatre in person, the film screen disappeared and the whole group was waiting for him on the stage, cheering him on. He ran right through the audience and onto the stage, where he was received with loud cheers, which the audience joined in promptly every night.<sup>69</sup>

But what was the absolute best thing about it was formulated in a contemporary review: "It is very droll, this combination of appearance and reality". With 'appearance' the eyewitness meant the film, and with 'reality' the presence of the film.

the actor on stage. Apparently the combination of film and performance was seen as funny *in itself*. By 1914, there had been so many examples of filmic inserts in live performances that it was given a name - 'film play' - as if it were a separate genre:

The principle (...) boils down to the fact that everything that happens in the street or in the field - generally *outdoors* - is recorded by the cinematographer with the camera, while the 'interiors' are played by the artists *in person*.<sup>70</sup>

Seen in this way, the film images enlarged the fictional space in which the 'song' took place, and this is also how Adriënné Solser made use of them. Indeed, the use of film allowed her characters to make all sorts of excursions, outside the Jordaan, outside Amsterdam, or even, as in Benno's films, outside the Netherlands. But it would not surprise me if, in addition to her talent as a humorist, Adriënné Solser could still count on the comic effect of her ~~inher~~ presence on and in front of the film screen. In this sense, too, the term explication does not do justice to her double performance: it was rather her version of the "film play" which had caused such a furore in the revue.

## In conclusion

Adriënné Solser's rightful place in Dutch film history is as a comic actress, independent producer and creator of a series of primitive Dutch farces that were extremely successful with audiences. These comedies were part of the Dutch silent film production of the 1920s, especially the comic film. Solser's bet- films were a variant on the popular Jordaan genre and, with her double performances, also on the mixture of film and theatre. Her performances in cinemas were also prototypical of the appeal that humorists retained long after film had proved itself as an independent form of entertainment. Adriënné Solser was an extremely flexible professional who knew how to adapt to the demands of the changing world of entertainment in the first decades of the twentieth century. She was also very accurate in her choice of the type of Amsterdam working-class woman, who she transferred effortlessly from one theatre genre to another, and from the discipline of the theatre to that of the cinema. But all these qualities of Adriënné Solser only come to light when the Dutch film historiography of the 1920s and 1930s widens its view to include the popular stage and the mixed forms of film and performance from which film as a film hoped to have freed itself.



## Nuts

1 This is an abridged and edited version of Annette Förster, 'Part i: Adriënnë Solser', *Histories of Fame and Failure. Adriënnë Solser, Musidora, Nell Shipman: Women Acting and Directing in the Silent Cinema in The Netherlands, France and North America*, PhD thesis University Utrecht 2005, 462 pp.; p. 21-139.

2 It is true that in 1919 she had celebrated her thirtieth anniversary, and presumably for this new jubilee had stretched her career by five years, yet, as will be discussed in detail later, she had certainly performed for 35 years up to 1924. See [Nathan Heyman] W[olf], 'Adriënnë Solser', *The Arts*, jg. 11, no. 587, 26 April 1919, p. 357.

3 Peter Delpout, 'A Cinema of Accidental Incidents', in: Geoffrey Donaldson, *Of Joy and Sorrow. A Filmography of Dutch Silent Fiction*, Netherlands Film Museum, Amsterdam 1997, p. 16.

4 Ruud Bishoff, 'The silent feature film', in: Karel Dibbets & Frank van der Maden (ed.), *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Film en Bioscoop tot 1940*, Weesp 1986, p. 98.

5 In the 1930s and 1940s, another Dutch woman was active as a film maker: the former editor of Joris Ivens, Heleen van Dongen. However, at that time she lived and worked in the United States, which meant that her films were not Dutch but American productions.

6 According to Marriage Certificate issued 2 November 1876 by the Municipality of Rotterdam; copy in the Netherlands Theatre Institute, Solser Family File (no. 620).

7 W[olf], 'Adriënnë Solser.

8 G.H.J., 'Chrëtiënni and Solser: Interview', *Weekblad 'Algemeen Belang'*, 31 December 1892, p. 9. Clipping in Nederlands Theater Instituut, Dossier Familie Solser (nr. 620).

9 Van Ruyven, 'Louissette', *De Hollandsche Lelie* 10 September 1930, p. 179. Clipping in Private Archive Louissette (code 389/12), Municipal Archive Amsterdam.

10 Otto Zeegers, 'Rhapsodie no. 45 (The feast of o.e.r.i.n.o.e.p.)', *De Theatertids* 9/276, 27 March 1915, p. 3. The feast of o.e.r.i.n.o.e.p. (Onze Eenige Roeping Is Naar Onderlinge Eenheid Pogen) was 'by artists, for artists' and from 1907 was held on Good Friday, because then all the artists did not have to perform but could entertain each other. The proceeds were used to provide funds for less fortunate artists.

11 Anonymous, 'Specialty show', clipping from *Pak me along* 2 March 1910 in scrapbook Rob du Mée (Recenties etc. concerning the performances in Variété Flora 16 November 1909 - 1 October 1910).

12 Archive Adriënnë Solser and Lien d'Oliveyra, Netherlands Film Museum, Amsterdam. With a few exceptions, there are no author's names mentioned for the verses and the songs. Nevertheless, I assume that most of them were not written by Solser, for two reasons. First, it was customary to have Jordaans texts written by authors specialized in the genre and language. And secondly, it was customary to buy verses and songs at the artists' market on the moon in Amsterdam's café De Kroon. I was able by chance to trace the author of one verse, 'O die mevrouwen', Uiltje (pseudonym used by two journalists from *De Telegraaf*, David Orobio de Castro and G. Blok, for their satirical texts).

13 Advertisement Rose Theatre, *De Theatertids* jg. 8 nr 108, 10.1.1914 and advertisement Cabaret Met-ropole, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 2 February 1914.

14 W[olf], 'Adriënnë Solser.

15 Anonymous (probably Wolf), 'Adriënnë Solser', *The Arts*, jg. 11, no. 586, 19 April 1919, p. 346.

16 Duets book', folder 10. Copy in 'Coupletsboek Adr. Solser', Amsterdam 4 October 1935, folder 14. Both in Archive Adriënnë Solser and Lien d'Oliveyra, Netherlands Film Museum.

17 'Asem in Exile' was the folk-parodic variant of the title of Vondel's 'Adam in Exile'.

18 Partly on the basis of this personal self-mockery, I assume that the prose texts were largely written by Solser himself. This is in contrast to the verses, as mentioned in note 12.

19 For the Dutch variant of this international phenomenon see in particular Jacques Klöters, *Honderd Jaar Amusement in Nederland*, The Hague 1987; Dries Krijn, *Bonte pracht, veder-*

gestion. *Geschiedenis van de revue in Nederland*, Zutphen 1980, and Ansje van Beusekom, 'De dubbele salto tussen *De nieuwe prikkel* en de jantjes', *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* 1997, no. 8, pp. 179-200.

20 Advertisement Astoria Theatre, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 27 December 1918.

21 M.v.A., 'Rozen-Theater', *De Theatertids* 10/7, 4 September 1915, p. 3.

22 Anonymous, 'Kom j'eens kijken, zag?', *Het Vaderland* 2 May 1916.

23 Advertisement Karseboom Cabaret, *Haagsche Courant* 24 March 1919.

24 Otto Zeegers, 'Rhapsodie no 36: Hóg de Jordaan!', *De Theatertids*, 9/266, 23 January 1915, p.

4. 25 In the 1970s and 1980s it was called the Mickery Theatre, now renamed Rose Theatre, but now without the hyphen.

26 P.K., 'Passage-Bioscoop. Kee en Janus to Paris', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 January 1924, 27

In my dissertation I explained that this was related to a shift in the meaning of the word 'cinema'. The term 'volks' was given a special significance. Whereas in a term such as "folk plays" that term stood for "by the people", i.e. based on the reality of a group from the people and addressed to this group as a collective, in a term such as "folk poet" (which was used for cabaret artists such as Speenhoff) it stood for "for the people", whereby that people was the Dutch and the texts were intended to hold up a mirror to the Dutch as individuals. See Förster, *Histories of Fame and Failure*, p. 78-80.

28 Ansje van Beusekom, *Art and Entertainment. Reactions to Film as a new medium in the Netherlands 1895-1940*, Haarlem 2001, p. 136.

29 For details see Förster, *Histories of Fame and Failure*, p. 102 and Marcel Westhoff, 'Alex Benno, exponent of pre-war Dutch film', *Historisch Tijdschrift Holland*, jg. 29, no. 4-5, 1997, pp. 274-294.

30 Solser had also played a supporting role in Maurits Binger's and B.E. Doxat Pratt's jantjes (1922). For further details see Donaldson, *Of Joy and Sorrow*, p. 219.

31 Anonymous, 'Premières: Kee and Janus to Berlin', *New Weekly for Cinematography*, jg. 1, no. 14-15, 5 January 1923, p. 4.

32 Anonymous, 'The film happy play', *New Weekly for Cinematography* jg. 2, no. 22, 29 February 1924.

33 Herman van Lee & Sjoerd Broersma, *The wonders of the film world*, Utrecht 1926, p. 12.

34 Anonymous, 'Bet draws the 100,000', *New Weekly for Cinematography* jg. 4, no. 17, 22 januari 1926. (Italics A.F.).

35 The Archive of Adriënné Solser and Lien d'Oliveyra in the Netherlands Film Museum also contains a scrapbook with clippings of reviews of these performances.

36 See Karel Dibbets, *Sprekende films. De komst van de geluidsfilm in Nederland 1928-1933*, Amsterdam 1993.

37 Barbarossa quoted in Anonymous, 'Lion Solser †', *De Telegraaf*, 3 August 1915.

38 Klöters, *Honderd jaar amusement in Nederland*, p. 109.

39 Krijn, *Bonte pracht, vederdracht*, p. 23.

40 Anonymous, 'Jan Grootveld †. Popular artist from the time of Reijding's revues', unspecified newspaper clipping, 24 April 1930, Amsterdam Municipal Archives, code AA 2000.81.

41 Krijn, *Colourful splendour, costume*, p. 220

42 Anonymous, 'Frascati - 'n Amsterdamsche Hartjesdag', *Algemeen Handelsblad* 17 April

1900. 43 Anonymous, 'Het Tooneel', unspecified newspaper cutting, 1902, Nederlands Theater Insti-

tuut, file Marius Spree (no. 633).

44 N.H.W[olf], 'Bleeke Bet', *The Arts* 10/538, 18 May 1918, p. 409.

45 The songs were written and composed by the renowned duo Louis Davids and Margie Morris.

46 The reviews do not indicate whether Solser also performed live at screenings of this film. De jantjes, just like bleeke bet en oranje hein, were not only released as silent films in the 1920s, but all three were also filmed again in a sound version in the 1930s. Clara Pafort-Overduin is researching the production and reception history of these Jordaan sound films. See her "De Jantjes: up through the cabaret?" in: *Vijftiende Jaarboek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*, Zutphen 2004, p. 165-183 and her sidebar.

I contributed to the article 'Cinema Context and research into social networks in film historiography: an introduction to discussion', in *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* jg. 9, nr. 2006-2, p. 28-45, esp. p. 38-44.

47 J.H. Rössing, 'Lion Solser †', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 5 August 1915.

48 Anonymous, 'Lion Solser †', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 5 August 1915.

49 Anonymous [ws. J.H. Rössing], 'Ensemble Solzer and Hesse', *News of the Day* 3 September 1910.

50 As an example, in my dissertation I analyzed the plot of Bleeke Bet, which Rido called the prototype of Boubier's plays. (Förster, *Histories of Fame and Failure*, p. 76-78). The dramatic conflict is based on the opposition between Bet's selfishness and the right to happiness of her daughter Jans. Pafort-Overduin's analysis of what she called the "women and their social networks" in the sound versions of the Jordaan films from the 1930s confirmed this observation.

51 Rido, 'Revue parade. Solser and Hesse on the move in "Have you seen the child yet?"', *The Telegraph* March 27, 1954.

52 Otto Zeegers, 'Rhapsodie no. 38 (The Triumf [sic] of the Fish)', *De Theatergids* jg. 9, no. 268, January 31, 1915, p. 4.

53 Sometimes Lion Solser was replaced by his wife, and maybe occasionally by his sister as well, which led some historians to erroneously conclude that Adriëne Solser had been part of the Ensemble himself. Possibly the fact that both were called Adriëne contributed to this mix-up.

54 Anonymous, "Mrs. Hesse's Jubilee," *The Arts*, vol. 8, no. 420, February 12, 1916, pp. 226-227.

55 Ansje van Beusekom, 'The Rise and Fall of the Lecturer as Entertainer in The Netherlands. Cinema Exhibition Practices in Transition Related to Local Circumstances', *Iris* no. 22, autumn 1996, pp. 131-144.

56 Chef van Dijk, 'The Explicateur ii', *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie* jg. 3, no. 1, 2 October 1924.

57 Anonymous, 'A visit to the "Eureka" studio', *Nieuwe Schiedamsche Courant*, 11 May 1928.

58 Anonymous, 'Film news', *De Alknaarsche Courant*, 26 August 1933.

59 This is a generally recognized and international fact. For the Dutch situation, see in particular Ansje van Beusekom, *Kunst en Amusement. Reactions to film as a new medium in the Netherlands, 1895-1940*, Haarlem 2001.

60 Van Beusekom, *Art and Entertainment*, p. 43.

61 Cobi Bordewijk, 'Splendidly coloured but very fascinating', *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis* nr. 8, 1997, p. 153-177.

62 N.H. Wolf, 'F.A. Nöggerath's Films: Bioscope-Theater, Amsterdam', *De Kunst* jg. 12, no. 656, August 21, 1920, p. 642.

63 Advertisement, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* 4 June 1917.

64 Anonymous, 'Variété in the cinema', *Art and Entertainment*, jg. 3, no 43, 27 October 1922, s.p. 65 Ibidem.

66 The Cinema Context website, which was not yet available at the time of my research, shows that Solser's colleagues Louise Fleuron and Louissette, for instance, were still regularly appearing in cinemas in the major cities well into the 1920s and 1930s respectively. See [www.cinemacontext.nl](http://www.cinemacontext.nl), click on 'voorstellingen' and type in one of these names.

67 Van Beusekom, 'The double somersault between *The New Stimulus* and the Jantjes'.

68 The film fragments are in the Nederlands Filmmuseum; the reviews in the Amsterdam Municipal Archives, Private Archive Louissette.

69 Rido, 'Revue-parade: The audience came to watch the same revue three times', *De Telegraaf* April 10, 1954.

70 Anonymous, "Film Game," *The Arts Jr.* 7, no. 355, November 14, 1914, p. 1.